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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, TAL AFAR; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution and Terrorism were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on September 14, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

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[1A.](#) "Why Do They Insist on Destroying Tal Afar?" (Al-Basa'er, weekly, affiliated with the Muslim Scholars Association, anti coalition, published this front-page unattributed editorial)

"The city of Tal Afar was well-known for its patriotism and sacrifice in defending Iraq's values and homeland; this city was one of the first to resist British occupation and its citizens were able to liberate their city after a severe battle with the enemy. Today, this city again resists the British and the American occupation of Iraq and has since the beginning of the war. Tal Afar has caused the occupation forces to suffer huge losses.

"However, there are some citizens who stood with the occupation forces against their own people. There were many initiatives by different groups wanting to solve problems that arose among the citizens of Tal Afar but these attempts were thwarted by known political groups who claimed that what was happening in Tal Afar was terrorism.

"These groups deliberately inflamed the crisis and in the end, a misguided attack was waged against this city by the occupation forces in cooperation with an elected Iraqi government. This government, like the former government, gave the green light to the occupation forces to attack and destroy the city of Fallujah. They attacked Tal Afar in order to satiate their hatred and bring an end to the brave resistance of its citizens. These acts will never affect the honest and patriotic Iraqis who will continue their jihad to defeat and destroy evil and force the occupation out of Iraq."

[1B.](#) "The Islamic Emirate of Al-Qa'im" (Al-Bayyan, affiliated with the Islamic Al-Dawa Party led by Al-Ja'afari, published a third-page column by Salim Rasoul)

"Terrorists have established a new Taliban like emirate in the city of Al-Qa'im and they have named it the Islamic Emirate of Al-Qa'im. They believe that this emirate is the first step in establishing a great Islamic emirate in Iraq led by the emir of the believers Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. The terrorists who were arrested during the military operations in Tal Afar announced that they celebrated the establishment of their emirate by beheading everyone in the city of Al-Qa'im who opposed them.

"We know that the terrorist ideology of Al-Qaeda in Iraq is focused on establishing extremist emirates--we know that fact very well and the Islamic world knows it too. The fact is, secular regimes consider radical Islamic emirates to be a clear and present danger to their existence and they prevent them from entering their countries. At the same time, these secular regimes ally themselves with terrorists and provide them with money, weapons, and material support to kill Iraqi people.

"Now, after we exposed this supposed emirate will those regimes continue supporting Zarqawi? We realize that this emirate is situated near Syria and it's possible that its borders extend to include Syrian land. The Pan Arab media reports that the official policy of Arab states is that they are neutral and don't support Baghdad. Some of these regimes announce that they support the Iraqi resistance in order to

expel the occupation from Iraq. When we say resistance we mean the radical Zarqawi movement. Do not blame us if we distrust the official Arab stance but we formulate our ideas according to what's published in the Arab media which is definitely reflective of Arab regimes. What the terrorists perpetrated in Al-Qa'im is an example of what they want to implement throughout the world. Those terrorists began in Iraq and they may expand to neighboring countries. Therefore, these countries had better support Iraq to eradicate this destructive ideology."

**1C.** "Who Are the Iraqis Who Will Ratify the Constitution?"  
(Al-Ittihad, pro-coalition, affiliated with PUK led by Talabani, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Hadi Mahdi)

"When the January 30th elections were announced some bet they would fail due to the deteriorating security situation and the lack of skills of the Iraqi police and army at the time. Many political parties demanded postponement of the elections until the security situation stabilized though they gave no guarantees that security would improve. But, on election day, Iraqis defied predictions when millions of them turned out en masse and went to the polls in ways that amazed observers.

"Iraqis did not care about threats to thwart the elections. After the results were announced, some lists received millions of votes which represented Iraqis. Then, the National Assembly was established to represent these millions and a president and his deputies were elected and the cabinet was elected too. The constitutional committee was established based on the winning electoral list.

"However, the committee was not established according to electoral representation but was established according to national priorities so as not to marginalize any Iraqi sect. So, another group was added to the constitution drafting committee and this group represented the brothers who did not participate in the elections. The millions of Iraqis who participated in the elections are Iraqi citizens and they belong to this country.

"But recently we started to hear statements that included unacceptable expressions revealing mistrust of fellow Iraqis. The masses of millions will keep moving forward to vote for the constitution while some of our brothers, who were added to the constitutional committee, say in their press conferences that they want a constitution that all Iraqis agree upon. What this really means is that the people who did not participate in the elections are the only Iraqis. We hope that those people will use the right words to unite the Iraqi people."

**1D.** "On Tal Afar"  
(Al-Sabah al-Jadeed, independent, published this front-page editorial by Ismaeel Zayyer)

"Our enemies have begun lamenting the victory of Iraqis' will and thus began displaying their hatred towards the new Iraq. We all listened to the announcement of the Minister of Defense, Dr. Sa'doun Al-Dulaimi, and the Minister of Interior, Mr. Bakr Jabr, about how the security forces killed 157 and detained more than 200 terrorists while the Iraqi Army suffered less than four causalities. These figures show the government's well-organized and firm policy against terrorism. The causalities of the enemy were fifty times that of the Iraqi Army in the Tal Afar military operation.

"I watched the enemies' report on Tal Afar and I noticed that they were talking about Iraqi Army causalities and ignored terrorist losses. They continued publishing fake stories on "Tal Afar and how its citizens resisted. Jawad Al-Khaledi's office stated that the Tal Afar operation's main goal was to refute dialogue with the Sunnis. Moreover, both the Muslim Scholars Association and Adnan Al-Dulaimi spoke about similar stories.

"Frankly, this is wrong and it's one of the biggest mistakes of the Sunni association. No one in Iraq will believe that they are telling the truth and they will never be able to prove those claims. Furthermore, they claimed that the displaced families in Tal Afar would exact revenge upon the Sunnis when they return to their city but this contradicts values, religion and patriotism. First of all, Sunni political groups such as the Muslim Scholars Association should not endeavor to harm people who belong to other sects. In fact, their duty is to fight Sudanese, Syrians, and Saudis who have entered the country to behead and loot. Where were those who weep for national unity today when Zarqawi turned Tal Afar into 18 weapons caches? Where were they when terrorists intimidated the city? Now, we want to ask the tribes of Rabee'a in northwestern Iraq what they did to stop the terrorism that is coming from outside of Iraq's borders."

**E. "The Constitution and Other Crises"**  
(Al-Ittihad newspaper, affiliated with the PUK led by Jalal Talabani, published this page-five editorial by Editor-in-chief Fryad Rawandouzi)

"It seems that the constitutional crisis has not ended because Sunnis have not agreed to the proposed draft and there are new requests from an influential Shi'a movement [i.e. al-Ja'afari's party] to re-review the draft and hold further discussions-under the pretext that the earlier draft was cooked up in the constitutional kitchen (under the auspices of party leaders) and not the constitutional committee.

"It is illogical to have the constitutional committee sit for another session when they could hardly reach agreement on the final draft. But this committee should meet again to look at the amendments, which have sought to minimize the differences to the constitution without altering its intrinsic principals.

"The most dangerous step likely to occur in the lead-up to October 15 is yet another request to amend the draft constitution; for any such request will lead not only to the destruction of the document but also to a ministerial crisis and the dissolution of the National Assembly. All members of the constitutional committee were dismayed and shocked by the strange request to review the draft document again.

"Is it possible to overcome existing obstacles? The amendments regarding water resources, the identity of Iraq, and international conventions should not be barriers to the constitution-all doors should remain open. It is not wise to sacrifice what we've reached thus far. The constitution will not satisfy all parties but it will satisfy the needs of the majority.

"Accordingly, we should not return to square one and destroy what we've built. The only way forward is a return to dialogue before it is too late."

SATTERFIELD